As most of you know, last Friday, President Trump signed an Executive Order suspending entry into the U.S. of green card holders, and non-immigrants (such as student visa holders) from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. While it is unclear whether certain aspects of this executive order will be enforced (such as against green card holders), this action has profound impact and makes our reality even more uncertain and complicated. We are observers watching a historic moment unfold, one that has not occurred since the immigration exclusion acts at the beginning of the 20th century. It undermines efforts not only to promote diversified communities but also to rally around common values, despite our differences.

I am heartened by Governor Cuomo's response to these events and wanted to share his words:

"I never thought I'd see the day when refugees, who have fled war-torn countries in search of a better life, would be turned away at our doorstep," Cuomo said. "We are a nation of bridges, not walls, and a great many of us still believe in the words 'give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses ...' This is not who we are, and not who we should be."

Ultimately the constitutionality and legality of the Executive Order will be decided in the courts. I believe that the distinction made in the order between Muslims and Christians is violative of both. And again, in my view, expressed by Senator McCain and other Republican leaders, the Order will cause more harm than good and has not been properly vetted. But personally, I cannot remain quiet while we turn our backs on people fleeing wars, make distinctions between religions, and label all of those of one religion a threat and those of the other virtuous. To those in the community who disagree, I recognize your right to do so but ask that you revisit the history of Germany in the 1930s, the internment of the Japanese in the beginning of World War II, McCarthyism in the 1950s, and the Civil rights battles in the 1960s.

For our students who are directly affected by this order and its implementation, here’s what we can offer as advice and support:

We strongly advise student, staff, and their families who may be affected and/or who have travel plans outside the US in the coming days to consider this Executive Order and its impact on re-entering the US.

International students and scholars who have immigration questions or specific questions about their current situation should contact the Office of International Programs and Services (international@purchase.edu). We will continue to keep you posted as we work with our campus colleagues, other colleges and universities, and the immigration law community to understand this and other immigration issues as they arise.
We urge students and staff to take advantage of counseling, our Multicultural Center, the School of Art and Design’s Days of Action and Dialogue, Casa Purchase and our various clubs as needed and to continue the discussion and dialogue that is so important at this time.

SUNY has established a website (www.suny.edu/immigration) to provide students and families with current resources as well as additional information as it becomes available.

Purchase College will continue to welcome and support students, staff, and faculty without regards to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, genetic information, or age. Please know that we are watching this situation closely and will do all we can to protect our community and those values that we hold dear. Presidents of colleges and universities have long used a bully pulpit to express themselves on issues of public importance. This is one of those issues that I believe we must speak out on. I welcome all feedback and dialogue.

www.purchase.edu  |  914.251.6000

Purchase College, State University of New York, 735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, NY 10577